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"WITH THE HONORS OF WAR"

SISTER JULIE

By WYTHE WILLIAMS

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WHEN CHENAL SINGS THE "MARSEILLAISE"

"WITH THE HONORS OF WAR"

· SISTER JULIE ·

By WYTHE WILLIAMS

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

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WHEN CHENAL SINGS THE "MARSEILLAISE"

I WENT to the Opéra Comique one day to hear Marthe Chenal sing the "Marseillaise." For several weeks previous I had heard a story going the rounds of what is left of Paris life to the effect that if one wanted a regular old-fashioned thrill he really should go to the Opéra Comique on a day when Mlle. Chenal closed the performance by singing the French national hymn. I was told there would be difficulty in securing a seat.

I was rather skeptical. I also considered that I had had sufficient thrills since the beginning of the war, both old-fashioned and new. I believed also that I had already heard the "Marseillaise" sung under the best possible circumstances to produce thrills. One of the first nights after mobilization 10,000 Frenchmen filled the street beneath the windows of the *New York Times* office where I was at work. They sang the "Marseillaise" for two hours, with a solemn hatred of their national enemy sounding in every note. The so-

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lemnity changed to a wild passion as the night wore on. Finally, cuirassiers of the guard rode through the street to disperse the mob. It was a terrific scene.

So I was willing to admit that the "Marseillaise" is probably the most thrilling and most martial national song ever written, but I was just not keen on the subject of thrills.

Then one day a sedate friend went to the Opéra Comique and it was a week before his ardor subsided. He declared that this rendition of a song was something that will be referred to in future years. "Why," he said, "when the war is over the French will talk about it in the way Americans still talk about Jenny Lind at Castle Garden, or De Wolf Hopper reciting 'Casey at the Bat.' "

This induced me to go. I was convinced that whether I got a thrill or not the singing of the "Marseillaise" by Chenal had become a distinct feature of Paris life during the war.

I never want to go again. To go again might deepen my impression—might better register the thrill. But then it might not be just the same. I would be keyed to such expectancy that I might be disappointed. Persons in the seats behind me might whisper. And just as Chenal got to the "Amour sacré de la patrie" some one might

cough. I am confident that something of the sort would surely happen. I want always to remember that ten minutes while Chenal was on the stage just as I remember it now. So I will not go again.

The first part of the performance was Donizetti's "Daughter of the Regiment," beautifully sung by members of the regular company. But somehow the spectacle of a fat soprano nearing forty in the rôle of the twelve-year-old vivandière, although impressive, was not sublime. A third of the audience were soldiers. In the front row of the top balcony were a number of wounded. Their bandaged heads rested against the rail. Several of them yawned.

After the operetta came a "Ballet of the Nations." The "nations," of course, represented the Allies. We had the delectable vision of the Russian ballerina dancing with arms entwined about several maids of Japan. The Scotch lassies wore violent blue jackets. The Belgian girls carried large pitchers and rather wept and watered their way about the stage. There were no thrills.

After the intermission there was not even available space. The majority of the women were in black—the prevailing color in these days. The

only touches of brightness and light were in the uniforms of the officers liberally sprinkled through the orchestra and boxes.

Then came "Le Chant du Depart," the famous song of the Revolution. The scene was a little country village. The principals were the officer, the soldier, the wife, the mother, the daughter and the drummer boy. There was a magnificent soldier chorus and the fanfare of drums and trumpets. The audience then became honestly enthusiastic. I concluded that the best Chenal could do with the "Marseillaise," which was next on the program, would be an anti-climax.

The orchestra played the opening bars of the martial music. With the first notes the vast audience rose. I looked up at the row of wounded leaning heavily against the rail, their eyes fixed and staring on the curtain. I noticed the officers in the boxes, their eyes glistening. I heard a convulsive catch in the throats of persons about me. Then the curtain lifted.

I do not remember what was the stage setting. I do not believe I saw it. All I remember was Chenal standing at the top of a short flight of steps, in the center near the back drop. I indistinctly remember that the rest of the stage was filled with the soldier chorus and that near the

footlights on either side were clusters of little children.

"Up, sons of France, the call of glory—"

Chenal swept down to the footlights. The words of the song swept over the audience like a bugle call. The singer wore a white silk gown draped in perfect Grecian folds. She wore the large black Alsatian head dress, in one corner of which was pinned a small tricolored cockade. She has often been called the most beautiful woman in Paris. The description was too limited. With the next lines she threw her arms apart, drawing out the folds of the gown into the tricolor of France—heavy folds of red silk draped over one arm and blue over the other. Her head was thrown back. Her tall, slender figure simply vibrated with the feeling of the words that poured forth from her lips. She was noble. She was glorious. She was sublime. With the "March on, march on," of the chorus, her voice arose high and fine over the full orchestra, and even above her voice could be sensed the surging emotions of the audience that seemed to sweep over the house in waves.

I looked up at the row of wounded. One man held his bandaged head between his hands and

was crying. An officer in a box, wearing the gorgeous uniform of the headquarters staff, held a handkerchief over his eyes.

Through the second verse the audience alternately cheered and stamped their feet and wept. Then came the wonderful "'Amour sacré de la patrie"—sacred love of home and country—verse. The crashing of the orchestra ceased, dying away almost to a whisper. Chenal drew the folds of the tricolor cloak about her. Then she bent her head and, drawing the flag to her lips, kissed it reverently. The first words came like a sob from her soul. From then until the end of the verse, when her voice again rang out over the renewed efforts of the orchestra, one seemed to live through all the glorious history of France. At the very end, when Chenal drew a short jeweled sword from the folds of her gown and stood, silent and superb, with the folds of the flag draped around her, while the curtain rang slowly down, she seemed to typify both Empire and Republic throughout all time. All the best of the past seemed concentrated there as that glorious woman, with head raised high, looked into the future.

And as I came out of the theater with the silent

audience I said to myself that a nation with a song and a patriotism such as I had witnessed could not vanish from the earth—nor again be vanquished.

"WITH THE HONORS OF WAR"

It was just dawn when I got off a train at Gerbéviller, the little "Martyr City" that hides its desolation as it hid its existence in the foothills of the Vosges.

There was a dense fog. At 6 A. M. fog usually covers the valleys of the Meurthe and Moselle. From the station I could see only a building across the road. A gendarme demanded my credentials. I handed him the *laisser-passer* from the Quartier Général of the "First French Army," which controls all coming and going, all activity in that region. The gendarme demanded to know the hour when I proposed to leave. I told him. He said it would be necessary to have the permit "viséd for departure" at the headquarters of the gendarmerie. He pointed to the hazy outlines of another building just distinguishable through the fog.

This was proof that the town contained buildings—not just a building. The place was not

entirely destroyed, as I had supposed. I went down the main street from the station, the fog enveloping me. I had letters to the town officials, but it was too early in the morning to present them. I would first get my own impressions of the wreck and ruin.

But I could see nothing on either hand as I stumbled along in the mud. So I commented to myself that this was not as bad as some places I had seen. I thought of the substantial station and the buildings across the road—untouched by war. I compared Gerbéviller with places where there is not even a station—where not even one house remains as the result of "the day when the Germans came."

The road was winding and steep, dipping down to the swift little stream that twists a turbulent passage through the town. The day was coming fast but the fog remained white and impenetrable. After a few minutes I began to see dark shapes on either side of the road. Tall, thin, irregular shapes, some high, some low, but with outlines all softened, toned down by the banks of white vapor.

I started across the road to investigate and fell across a pile of jagged masonry on the sidewalk. Through the fog I could see tumbled piles of

bricks. The shapes still remained—specters that seemed to move in the light from the valley. An odor that was not of the freshness of the morning assailed me. I climbed across the walk. No wall of buildings barred my path, but I mounted higher on the piles of brick and stones. A heavy black shape was now at my left hand. I looked up and in the shadow there was no fog. I could see a crumbled swaying side of a house that was. The odor I noticed was that caused by fire. Sticking from the wall I could see the charred wood joists that once supported the floor of the second story. Higher, the lifting fog permitted me to see the waving boughs of a tree that hung over the house that was. At my feet, sticking out of a pile of bricks and stones, were the twisted iron fragments of a child's bed. I climbed out into the sunshine.

I was standing in the midst of a desolation and a silence that were profound. There was nothing there that lived, except a few fire-blacked trees that stuck up here and there in the shelter of broken walls. Now I understood the meaning of the spectral shapes. They were nothing but the broken walls of the other houses that were. They were all that remained of nine-tenths of Gerbéviller.

I wandered along to where the street turned

sharply. There the ground pitched straight to the little river. Half of a house stood there, unscathed by fire; it was one of those unexplainable freaks that often occur in great catastrophes. Even the window glass was intact. Smoke was coming from the chimney. I went to the opposite side and there stood an old woman looking out toward the river, brooding over the ruin stretching below her.

"You are lucky," I said. "You still have your home."

She turned a toothless countenance toward me and threw out her hands. I judged her to be well over seventy. It wasn't her home, she explained. Her home was "là-bas"—pointing vaguely in the distance. She had lived there fifty years—now it was burned. Her son's house, he had saved thirty years to be able to call it his own, was also gone; but then her son was dead, so what did it matter? Yes, he was shot on the day the Germans came. He was ill, but they killed him. Oh, yes, she saw him killed. When the Germans went away she came to his house and built a fire in the stove. It was very cold.

And why were the houses burned? No; it was not the result of bombardment. Gerbéviller was not bombarded until after the houses were burned.

They were burned by the Germans systematically. They went from house to house with their torches and oil and pitch. They did not explain why they burned the houses, but it was because they were angry.

The old woman paused a moment, and a faint flicker of a smile showed in the wrinkles about her eyes. I asked her to continue her story.

"You said because they were angry," I prompted. The smile broadened. Oh, yes, they were angry, she explained. They did not even make the excuse that the villagers fired upon them. They were just angry through and through. And it was all because of those seventy-five French chasseurs who held the bridge.

Some one called to her from the house. She hobbled to the door. "Any one can tell you about the seventy-five chasseurs," she said, disappearing within.

I went on down the road and stood upon the bridge over the swift little river. It was a narrow, tiny bridge only wide enough for one wagon to pass. Two roads from the town converged there, the one over which I had passed and another which formed a letter "V" at the junction with the bridge. Across the river only one road led away from the bridge and it ran straight up

a hill, when it turned suddenly into the broad national highway to Lunéville, about five miles away.

One house remained standing at the end of the bridge, nearest the town. Its roof was gone, and its walls bore the marks of hundreds of bullets, but it was inhabited by a little old man of fifty, who came out to talk with me. He was the village carpenter. His house was burned, so he had taken refuge in the little house at the bridge. During the time the Germans were there he had been a prisoner, but they forgot him the morning the French army arrived. Everybody was in such a hurry, he explained.

I asked him about the seventy-five chasseurs at the bridge.

Ah, yes, we were then standing on the site of their barricade. He would tell me about it, for he had seen it all from his house half way up the hill.

The chasseurs were first posted across the river on the road to Lunéville, and when the Germans approached, early in the morning, they fell back to the bridge, which they had barricaded the night before. It was the only way into Gerbéviller, so the chasseurs determined to fight. They had torn up the street and thrown great earthworks across

one end of the bridge. Additional barricades were thrown up on the two converging streets, part way up the hill, behind which they had mitrailleuses which could sweep the road at the other end of the bridge.

About a half mile to the south a narrow footbridge crossed the river, only wide enough for one man. It was a little rustic affair that ran through the grounds of the Château de Gerbéviller, which faced the river only a few hundred yards below the main bridge. It was a very ancient château, built in the twelfth century and restored in the seventeenth century. It was a royal château of the Bourbons. In it once lived the great François de Montmorency, Duc de Luxembourg and Marshal of France. Now it belonged to the Marquise de Lamberty, a cousin of the King of Spain.

I interrupted, for I wanted to hear about the chasseurs. I gave the little old man a cigarette. He seized it eagerly—so eagerly that I also handed him a cigar. He fondled that cigar for a moment and then placed it in an inside pocket. It was a very cheap and very bad French cigar, for I was in a part of the country that has never heard of Havanas, but to the little old man it was something precious. "I will keep it for Sunday," he said.

I then got him back to the seventy-five chasseurs. It was just eight o'clock in the morning—a beautiful sunshiny morning—when the German column appeared around the bend in the road which we could see across the bridge, and which joined the highway from Lunéville. There were twelve thousand in that first column. One hundred and fifty thousand more came later. A band was playing "Deutschland über Alles," and the men were singing. The closely-packed front ranks of infantry broke into the goose step as they came in sight of the town. It was a wonderful sight; the sun glistened on their helmets; they marched as though on parade right down almost to the opposite end of the bridge.

Then came the command to halt. For a moment there was a complete silence. The Germans, only a couple of hundred yards from the barricade, seemed slowly to consider the situation. The Captain of the chasseurs, from a shelter behind the very little house that was still standing—and where his men up the two roads could see him—softly waved his hand.

Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack! The bullets from the mitrailleuses whistled across the bridge into the front ranks of the

"Deutschland über Alles" singers, while the men behind the bridge barricade began a deadly rifle fire.

Have you ever heard a mitrailleuse? It is just like a telegraph instrument, with its insistent clickety click-click-click, only it is a hundred times as loud. Indeed I have been told by French officers that it has sometimes been used as a telegraph instrument, so accurately can its operator reel out its hundred and sixty shots a minute.

On that morning at the Gerbéviller barricade, however, it went faster than the telegraph. These men on the converging roads just shifted their range slightly and poured bullets into the next ranks of infantry and so on back along the line, until Germans were dropping by the dozen at the sides of the straight little road. Then the column broke ranks wildly and fled back into the shelter of the road from Lunéville.

A half hour later a detachment of cavalry suddenly rounded the corner and charged straight for the barricade. The seventy-five were ready for them. Some of them got half way across the bridge and then tumbled into the river. Not one got back around the corner of the road to Lunéville.

There was another half hour of quiet, and then from the Lunéville road a battery of artillery got into action. Their range was bad, so far as any achievement against the seventy-five was concerned, so they turned their attention to the château, which they could easily see from their position across the river. The first shell struck the majestic tower of the building and shattered it. The next smashed the roof, the third hit the chapel—and so continued the bombardment until flames broke out to complete the destruction.

Of course the Germans could not know that the château was empty, that its owner was in Paris and both her sons fighting in the French army. But they had secured the military advantage of demolishing one of the finest country houses in France, with its priceless tapestries, ancient marbles and heirlooms of the Bourbons. A howl of German glee was heard by the seventy-five chasseurs crouching behind their barricades. So pleased were the invaders with their achievement that next they bravely swung out a battery into the road leading to the bridge, intending to shell the barricades. The Captain of chasseurs again waved his hand. Every man of the battery was killed before the guns were in position. It took an entire company of infantry—half of them being

killed in the action—to haul those guns back into the Lunéville road, thus to clear the way for another advance.

From then on until 1 o'clock in the afternoon there were more infantry attacks, all failing as lamentably as the first. The seventy-five were holding off the 12,000. At the last attack they let the Germans advance to the entrance of the bridge. They invited them with taunts to advance. Then they poured in their deadly fire, and as the Germans broke and fled they permitted themselves a cheer. Up to this time not one chasseur was killed. Only four were wounded.

Shortly after 1 o'clock the German artillery wasted a few more shells on the ruined château and the chasseurs could see a detachment crawling along the river bank in the direction of the narrow footbridge that crossed through the château park a half mile below. The Captain of the chasseurs sent one man with a mitrailleuse to hold the bridge. He posted himself in the shelter of a large tree at one end. In a few minutes about fifty Germans appeared. They advanced cautiously on the bridge. The chasseur let them get half way over before he raked them with his fire. The water below ran red with blood.

The Germans retreated for help and made

another attack an hour later with the same result. By 4 o'clock, when the lone chasseur's ammunition was exhausted, it is estimated that he had killed 175 Germans, who made five desperate rushes to take the position, which would have enabled them to make a flank attack on the seventy-four still holding the main bridge. When his ammunition was gone—which occurred at the same time as the ammunition at the main bridge was exhausted—this chasseur with the others succeeded in effecting a retreat to a main body of cavalry. If he still lives—this modern Horatius at the bridge—he remains an unnamed hero in the ranks of the French army, unhonored except in the hearts of those few of his countrymen who know.

During the late hours of the afternoon aeroplanes flew over the chasseurs' position, thus discovering to the Germans how really weak were the defenses of the town, how few its defenders. Besides the ammunition was gone. But for eight hours—from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon—the seventy-five had held the 12,000.

Had that body of 12,000 succeeded earlier the 150,000 Germans that advanced the next day might have been able to fall on the French right flank during a critical battle of the war. The total

casualties of the chasseurs were three killed, three captured, and six wounded.

The little old man and I had walked to the entrance of the château park before he finished his story. It was still too early for breakfast. I thanked him and told him to return to his work in the little house by the bridge. I wanted to explore the château at leisure.

I entered the place—what was left of it. Most of the walls were standing. Walls built in the twelfth century do not break easily, even with modern artillery. But the modern roof and seventeenth century inner walls were all demolished. Not a single article of furniture or decoration remained. But the destruction showed some of the same freaks—similar to that little house left untouched by fire on the summit of the hill.

For instance, the Bourbon coat of arms above the grand staircase was untouched, while the staircase itself was just splintered bits of marble. On another fragment of the wall there still hung a magnificent stag's antlers. Strewed about in the corners I saw fragments of vases that had been priceless. Even the remnants were valuable. In the ruined music room I found a piece of fresh, clean music (an Alsatian waltz), lying on the mantelpiece. I went out to the front of the build-

ing, where the great park sweeps down to the edge of the river. An old gardener in one of the side paths saw me. We immediately established cordial relations with a cigarette.

He told me how, after the chasseurs retreated beyond the town, the Germans—reduced over a thousand of their original number by the activities of the day—swept over the barricades of the bridge and into the town. Yes, the old woman I had talked with was right about it. They were very angry. They were ferociously angry at being held eight hours at that bridge by a force so ridiculously small.

The first civilians they met they killed, and then they began to fire the houses. One young man, half-witted, came out of one of the houses near the bridge. They hanged him in the garden behind the house. Then they called his mother to see. A mob came piling into the château headed by four officers. All the furniture and valuables that were not destroyed they piled into a wagon and sent back to Lunéville. Of the gardener who was telling me the story they demanded the keys of the wine cellars. No; they did not injure him. They just held him by the arms while several dozen of the soldiers spat in his face.

While the drunken crew were reeling about the

place, one of them accidentally stumbled upon the secret underground passage leading to the famous grottoes. These grottoes and the underground connection of the château were built in the fifteenth century. They are a half mile away, situated only half above ground, the entrance looking out on a smooth lawn that extends to the edge of the river. Several giant trees, the trunks of which are covered with vines, half shelter the entrance, which is also obscured by climbing ivy. The interior was one of the treasures of France. The vaulted ceilings were done in wonderful mosaic; the walls decorated with marbles and rare sea shells. In every nook were marble pedestals and antique statuary, while the fountain in the center, supplied from an underground stream, was of porphyry inlaid with mosaic.

The Germans looked upon it with appreciative eyes. But they were still very angry. Its destruction was a necessity of war. It could not be destroyed by artillery because it was half under ground and screened by the giant trees. But it could be destroyed by picks and axes. A squad of soldiers was detailed to the job. They did it thoroughly. The gardener took me there to see. Not a scrap of the mosaic remained. The fountain was smashed to bits. A headless Venus and

a smashed and battered Adonis were lying prone upon the ground.

The visitors of the château and environs afterward joined their comrades in firing the town. Night had come. Also across the bridge waited the 150,000 reenforcements, come from Lunéville. The five hundred of the two thousand inhabitants who remained were herded to the upper end of the town near the station. That portion was not to be destroyed because the German General would make his headquarters there.

The inhabitants were to be given a treat. They were to witness the entrance of the hundred and fifty thousand—the power and might of Germany was to be exhibited to them. So while the flames leaped high from the burning city, reddening the sky for miles, while old men prayed, while women wept, while little children whimpered, the sound of martial music was heard down the street near the bridge. The infantry, packed in close formation, the red light from the fire shining on their helmets, were doing the goose step up the main street to the station—the great German army had entered the city of Gerbéviller with the honors of war.

SISTER JULIE, CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR

A LITTLE round apple dumpling sort of woman in nun's costume was bobbing a curtsy to me from the doorway. In excited French she begged me to be seated. For I was "Monsieur l'Américain" who had come to visit Gerbéviller, the little community nestling in the foothills of the Vosges, that has suffered quite as much from Germans as any city, even those in Belgium. It was her "grand pleasure" that I should come to visit her.

I stared for a moment in amazement. I could scarcely realize that this plump, bobbing little person was the famous Sister Julie. I had pulled every wire I could discover among my acquaintances at the Foreign Office and the Ministry of War to be granted the privilege of making the trip into that portion of the forbidden "zone of military activity" where Sister Julie had made her name immortal. I carried a letter from one of the great officials of the Quai d'Orsay, addressed to the little nun in terms of reverence

that one might use toward his mother. He signed himself "Yours, with great affection," after craving that she would grant me audience. And there she was, with the letter still unopened in her hand, telling me how glad she was to see me.

I confess I expected a different type of woman. I thought a different type necessary to handle the German invaders in the fashion Sister Julie handled them at Gerbéviller. I imagined a tall, commanding woman—like Madame Macherez, Mayor of Soissons—would enter the little sitting room where I had been waiting that sunny morning.

In that little sitting room the very atmosphere of war is not permitted. There is too much close at hand, where nine-tenths of the city lies in ashes as a result of the German visit. So in that room there is nothing but comfort, peace and good cheer. Potted geraniums fill the window boxes, pretty chintz curtains cover the glass. Where bullets had torn furrows in the plaster and drilled holes in the woodwork the wounds were concealed as far as possible. It was hard to realize that the deep, rumbling roars that shook the house while we talked were caused by a Franco-German artillery duel only a few kilometers away.

The little woman drew out chairs from the cen-

ter table and we seated ourselves, she talking continuously of how glad she was that one from "that great America" should want to see her and know about her work. Ah! her work, there was still so much to do!

She got up and toddled to the window, drawing aside the chintz curtains. "Poor Gerbéviller!" she sighed as we looked out over the desolate waste of burned houses. "My poor, poor Gerbéviller!"

Tears stood in her brown eyes and fell upon the wide white collar of the religious order that she wore. She brushed them aside quickly and turned to the table, again all smiles and dimples. Yes! dimples, for although Sister Julie is small, she is undeniably plump. She has dimples in her cheeks and in her chin—chins I might say. She even has dimples on the knuckles of her hands, after the fashion of babies. Her face is round and rosy. Her voice low and mellow. She looks only about forty of her sixty years—a woman who seems to have taken life as something that is always good. Evil and Germans seem never to have entered her door.

Then I remembered what this woman had done; how all France is talking about her and is proud of her. How the President of the Republic went

to the little, ruined city, accompanied by the Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, and a great military entourage, just to hang the jeweled cross of the Legion of Honor about her neck. I wondered what they thought when she bobbed her curtsy in the doorway.

For it took a war to distinguish this little woman from the crowd. Outside her order she was unknown before the Germans came to France. But it did not matter to her. She just went placidly and smilingly on her way—"doing the Lord's work," as she told me. Then the day arrived when the Germans came, and this little round apple dumpling woman blew up. That is just the way it was. I could tell it from the way her brown eyes flashed when she told the tale to me. She was angry through and through just from the telling. She just exploded when the Germans entered her front door. And then her name was written indelibly on the scroll of fame as one of the great heroines of the war.

The Germans wanted bread, did they?—such was the way the story began—well, what did they mean by coming to her for it? They burned the baker's shop, didn't they, on the way through the town? Well, how did they expect her to furnish them bread? Her bread was for her people.

Yes, she had a good supply of it. But the Germans could find their own bread.

The German officer pointed a revolver at her head. She reached out her hand and struck it from his grasp. Then she waved a plump finger under his nose. Her voice was no longer low and mellow. It was commanding and austere. How dared he point a revolver at her—a "religieuse," a nun? He could get right out of her house, too, —and get out quick.

The officer's heavy jaw dropped in astonishment. He backed his way along the narrow hall, not stopping to pick up his weapon, and kicking backward the file of soldiers that crowded behind him. At the door Sister Julie put a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"You are an officer," she said—the man understood French perfectly. "Well, while your soldiers are setting fire to the town, you just tell them to keep out of this end of the street. This is my house; it is for me and the five Sisters with me. Now we have made it a hospital. You barbarians just keep out of here with your burning."

Barbarians! The officer raised his fist to strike. Something that was not of heaven made Sister Julie's eyes deadly black. The man lowered his fist, quailing. "The devil!" he said.

Yes, barbarians! She almost shouted the word at him—and it was quite understood that his men were not to burn the hospital or the houses adjoining.

The crowd cleared out of the house rapidly and the breadth of Sister Julie's form filled the doorway. It was night and the burning was progressing rapidly, the Germans methodically firing every house. Some soldiers came to the house next to the hospital, and broke open the door. Sister Julie left her position in the hospital doorway and advanced upon them.

"Go away from here," she ordered. "Don't you dare set that house afire. It is next to the hospital. If it burns the hospital will burn, too. So go away—your officers have said that you are not to burn this end of the street."

The soldiers gazed at her stupidly. She advanced upon them, waving her arms. Several, after staring a moment, suddenly made the sign of the cross, and the entire party disappeared down the street to continue their destruction elsewhere.

The little nun then left her post at the door. She went to see that her food supplies were safe. She had a conference with the other Sisters, and visited the beds of the thirteen wounded that the

house already contained. Six of the wounded were of the band of seventy-five chasseurs who had held the Gerbéviller bridge against the Germans—twelve thousand Germans for eight hours—until their ammunition gave out. The others were civilians who were shot when the Germans finally entered the town.

After visiting her wounded, Sister Julie went out the back door of the house accompanied by two of the Sisters. The three carried large clothes baskets, kitchen knives, and a hatchet. Through the gardens and behind the burning houses they passed down the hill to the part of the city near the river, which was already smoldering in ashes. They went into the ruined barns, where the cows and horses were all burned alive. I was shown a bleached white bone, a souvenir of one of the cows.

With the hatchet and knives they secured enough bones and flesh from the dead animals to fill the two great baskets. Then they climbed painfully up the hill, behind the burning buildings, to the back door of their home. Water was drawn from their well, and a great fire built in the old-fashioned chimney in the kitchen. The enormous kettle was filled with the water, the meat and the bones, and soon the odor from gal-

lons of soup penetrated the outer door to the street. Again a German officer headed a delegation into the hall.

"You have food here," he announced to Sister Julie.

"We have," she snapped back. She was very busy. She waved the butcher knife under his nose. She then told him that the soup was for the people of Gerbéviller and for her wounded. She expressed no regret that there would be none left for Germans.

The officer said that the twelve thousand who entered Gerbéviller that afternoon was the advance column. The main body, with the commissariat, was coming shortly. Meanwhile, they were hungry. They would take Sister Julie's supply. They would take it—eh? Take it? They would only do that over her dead body. Meanwhile, they would leave her kitchen instantly. They did—the butcher knife making ferocious passes behind them on their way to the door. Sister Julie was still doing her "work for the Lord."

She then ordered all the wash tubs filled with water and brought inside the hall. The fire was coming into the street. Dense smoke was everywhere. Even the Germans now seemed willing

to save that particular part of Gerbéviller. It was the portion near the railway station and the telegraph. A substantial building near the *gare* would make an excellent headquarters for their General, who was due to arrive shortly. The civilians (only a few of the 2,000 inhabitants remained) were all herded into a field just on the outskirts of the town. Sister Julie, with Sister Hildegarde, sallied forth with their soup, and fed them. The next day she would see that the Germans allowed them to come to the hospital for more.

When she returned, a number of soldiers who had discovered a wine cellar were reeling up the street. They stopped in front of the hospital, but turned their attention to the house opposite. They would burn it. It had evidently been forgotten. They broke into the place, and in a moment flames could be seen through the lower windows.

Sister Julie called to the soldiers. They stared at her from the middle of the road. She motioned for them to come to her. They came. She told them to follow her into the hall. There she showed them the wash tubs full of water. They were to carry those tubs across the street and put out the fire they had started, and which

would endanger the hospital. This was according to orders given by the officers. After putting out the fire they were to bring the tubs back and refill them from the well in the back yard. The work was too heavy for the Sisters.

When these orders were obeyed, Sister Julie carried a little camp chair to the front steps and began a vigil that lasted all night long and half the next day. She saw the great German army of a hundred and fifty thousand march by, the band playing "Deutschland über Alles," the infantry doing the goose step as they passed the burning houses. Four times during the night the tubs of water in the hall were emptied and refilled when the flames crept close to her house.

At dawn next morning four officers approached her where she sat upon the doorstep. One of them informed her that, inasmuch as she was concealing French soldiers with arms inside the house, they intended to make a search.

"You are telling a lie," she informed them calmly, and did not budge. Two of the officers drew revolvers. Sister Julie sniffed contemptuously. The first officer again spoke. But his tone altered. It was less bumptious. He said that, inasmuch as the house had been spared the flames, at least an investigation was necessary.

Sister Julie arose and started inside. The officers stopped her. Two of them would lead the way. The other two would follow. The pair, with drawn revolvers, entered first and tiptoed cautiously down the hall. Then came the little nun. The second pair drew poniards and brought up the rear. She directed them to the rooms on the first floor, the sitting room, dining room and the kitchen, where Sister Hildegarde was busy over the fire. Then they went upstairs to the beds of the wounded. The first officer insisted that the covers be drawn back from each bed to make sure that the occupants were really wounded. Sister Julie remained silent at the door. As they turned to leave, she said with sarcasm, but with dignity: "You have seen. You know that I have spoken the truth. We are six Sisters of Mercy. Our work is to care for the sick. We will care for your German wounded, as well as our French. You may bring them here."

That morning the invaders began battle with the French, who had finished their entrenchments some kilometers on the other side of the town. At night the Germans accepted Sister Julie's invitation, and brought two hundred and fifty-eight wounded to her house. They completely filled the place. They were placed in rows in the

sitting room, the dining room, and the hall. They were even in the kitchen and in the attic. The weather was fine and they were stretched in rows in the garden. The few other houses undestroyed by fire were also turned into hospitals, and for fourteen days Sister Julie and her five assistants scarcely slept. They just passed the time giving medicine and food and nursing wounds. By the fourteenth day, the French had made a considerable advance and were dropping shells into the town, so the Germans decided to take away their own wounded.

During all this time daily rations were served to the civilian survivors, on orders secured by Sister Julie at the German headquarters. The civilians were ill-treated, but they were fed. Sister Julie gave me concrete instances of outrage. Many were killed for no reason whatever; some were sent as hostages to Germany. During fourteen days they were herded in the field. Afterward ten were found dead, with their hands manacled. Sister Julie told me one instance of an old woman, a paralytic, seventy-eight years old, who was taken out in an automobile to show the various wine cellars among the neighboring farms. The old woman had not been out of her house for years and did not know the wine cellars.

So the Germans killed her. Sister Julie went out at night and found her body. She and Sister Hildegarde buried it.

On the morning of the fifteenth day, the battle was fiercer than ever. The French had taken a hill near the outskirts, and mitrailleuse bullets frequently whistled through the streets. Several times they entered the windows of Sister Julie's house and buried themselves in the walls. But none of the Sisters was hurt.

There was a lull in the fighting for the next few days. The French were very busy at something—the Germans knew not what. They became more insolent than ever, and drank of the wine they had stored at the *gare*. In the ruins of the church they found the grilled iron strong box, where the priest, who had been sent to Germany as a hostage, had locked up the golden communion vessels, afterward giving the key to Sister Julie. The lock was of steel, and very old and strong. They tried to break it, but failed. They came to Sister Julie for the key, and she sent them packing. "I lied to them," she said softly. "I told them I didn't have the key."

Through the grilled iron of the box the soldiers could see the vessels. They were of fine gold, and very ancient. They were given to the

church in the fifteenth century by René, Duc de Lorraine and King of Jerusalem. The strong box was riveted to the foundations of the church with bands of steel and could not be carried away. They shot at the lock, to break it. But it did not break. Instead the bullets penetrated the box, a half dozen tearing ragged holes in the vessels. The wine finally became of greater interest than the gold, and the soldiers went away. That night Sister Julie went alone into the ruins of the church, opened the box, and took the vessels out.

She paused in her story, got up from her chair, and unlocked a cabinet in the wall. From it she brought the vessels wrapped in a white cloth. I took the great golden goblet in my hands and saw the holes of the German bullets. Sister Julie sat silent, looking out through the chintz curtains into the street. Then she smiled.

She was thinking of the eighth morning after the wounded had been taken away. That was the happiest morning of her life, she told me. At 5 o'clock that morning, just after daybreak, Sister Hildegarde had come to her bed to tell her that the Germans stationed near the *gare* in that part of the town all seemed to be going to the

ruined part, near the river, in the opposite direction from the French. A few minutes later Sister Julie got up and looked from the window. Then she almost fell down the stairs in her rush to get out of doors. About fifty yards up the street was a watering trough. Seated on horseback before that trough, watering their animals, laughing and smoking cigarettes, were six French dragoons.

"I cried at the blessed sight of them," she said. "They sat there, so gay, so debonair, as only Frenchmen know how to sit on horses." Sister Julie hurried to them. They smiled at her and saluted as she approached.

"But do you know the Germans are here?" she anxiously inquired. "You may be taken prisoners."

"Oh, no, we won't," they answered in chorus. "There are thirty thousand more of us just behind—due here in about two minutes. The whole French army is on the advance."

Then came thirty thousand. After the thirty thousand came more thousands. All that day the street echoed to the feet of marching Frenchmen. Their faces were dark and terrible when they saw what the Germans had done. Most of the day

Sister Julie sat on her doorstep and wept for joy. Since that morning not a German has been seen in Gerbéviller.

Sister Julie ceased her story and wiped the tears that had been running in streams down her cheeks. We heard the rattle of a drum outside the window. It was the signal of the town crier with news for the population. Sister Julie opened the window and looked out. It was the announcement of the meeting to be held that afternoon, a meeting that she had arranged for discussion of plans for rebuilding the town. Five hundred of the population had returned. There was so much work to do. The streets must be cleared of the débris. The sagging walls must be torn down and new buildings erected. It would be done quickly, immediately almost; aid was forthcoming from many quarters. The new houses would be better than the old. The streets were to be wide and straight, not narrow and crooked. Gerbéviller was to arise from her ashes modern and improved. And only a few miles away the cannon still roared and thundered.

I asked her about the Cross of the Legion of Honor given her by President Poincaré. I asked why she did not wear it. A pleased flush deepened the color in her rosy cheeks. I shall

always remember the grace and dignity of her answer.

"I do not wear it because it was not meant for me alone," she said. "It was given to the women of France who have done their duty."

"Not the little red ribbon of the order," I persisted. "You should pin that on your dress."

But Sister Julie shook her head. She is a "religieuse," she explained. Nuns do not wear decorations. They are doing the work of the Lord.